DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 172 111 CG 013 554

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TITLE A Comparison of Sexual Attitudes and Practices of Black Junior College Students.
PUB DATE [77]
NOTE 18p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Patterns; *Black Students; *Interpersonal Relationship; Junior Colleges; Marriage; Research Projects; *Sex Differences; *Sexuality; *Student Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Premarital Sex

ABSTRACT

The attitudes of community college students toward premarital sexual relationships were investigated. Subjects were 83 Black college men and women. A 30-item questionnaire was administered to each subject. Results indicated that: (1) females reported less frequent occurrence of sexual relations than males; (2) neither sex reported a high incidence of sexual relations on a weekly basis; (3) men tended to have more relations with numerous special and casual friends; and (4) females chose a steady monogamous love relationship while males chose either the same or a relationship not involving monogamy or love. (Author/HLM)

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A Comparison of Sexual Attitudes and Practices of Black Junior College Students

by

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One might say that Victorian standards led society to take sex out of love. Similarly, today's standards attempt to take love out of sex (May 1974). According to May both are puritannical attempts to divorce mind and body and thus sex and love. It is part of our schizoid world. For some individuals, sex does not imply love or any form of emotion. Others delude themselves into believing it is love to justify the act, thereby removing guilt. Sex has become a mechanical entity.

Hite (1977) cited these variables as being an integral part of the modern woman's dilimna in sexual relationships. Her intent was to gereralize hypotheses to include the behavior of all women as a minority group.

By contrast, surveying other literature might lead one to conclude Black women are somewhat unique in their sexual behavior. This is due to the evolutionary role of the family unit assigned to Blacks by theorists from the pervading culture.

According to Thomas (1969) the social deviance model conceptualized by the dominant culture only views the Afro-American family as a :

> "....pathological socializing agent transmitting cultural malignance...."

Moreover, Broom and Selznik (1963) contended that the Negro family developed in the face of insurmountable obstacles to adequate family integration. Slavery to be sure and later emancipation led to wide spread disruption and instability in Negro life and man-woman relations. Hence due to separation of the father from the cohesive unit the matriarchal family emerged in contrast to the white norm of the patriarchal family.

In addition, Broom and Selznik (1963) postulated that especially in rural areas sexual relations begin at an early age. Also, a large percentage of relationships are common-law relationships.

Similarly, Reiss (1968) felt there were distinct variations in the way members of a race viewed premarital relations. Blacks as opposed to whites were much more likely to condone premarital relations.

In light of these concepts the Black female personality becomes an interesting subject for analysis. It is easy for one to deduce that due to cultural background she has been defined as both a sex object and a medium of security to her family. In essence she is a member of two minority groups by virtue of sex and race.

As such she should logically react rather distinctly to the sexual revolution in contrast to her male counterpart. In many instances she has been asked to assume both a masculine and a feminine role.

As a prime member of the Black family unit one may feel that women in general would desire security and stability in sexual relationships. As a woman one would expect her sexual attitudes to be in line with the mainstream of women described by Hite (1977).

Accordingly it is hypothesized that women as opposed to men will prefer more intimate monogamous types of relationships, that her fears surrounding relationship termination, rejection will be stronger than her male counterpart. Likewise, females should experience different attitudes from males in viewing relationship committments and exploitations. These hypotheses seem in line with the roles the general culture has traditionally developed for females, that of entwining love and sex (Fisher 1973) and of being uncertain, passive personalities (Freeman 1970). This is in opposition to the stereotype assigned Blacks by white theoreticians.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects were eighty-three Black college freshman and sophomores at State Community College, East St. Louis, Illinois. Fifty subjects were female and thirty-three were male. Two women refused to participate in the study on the grounds they had never experienced premarital relations. Fifteen other students, eleven women and four men also refused participation without definitive reasons. The students were selected at random from general psychology and child psychology classes. Further descriptive data on their characteristics is provided in the results section.

Materials

A thirty item questionnaire designed to measure attitudes towards premarital sexual relationships was constructed and used.

Procedure

The subjects were given the questionnaire during a portion of class time and were asked to respond as accurately as possible. Those who were presently married were instructed to respond to the questions on the basis of their relations prior to marriage.

RESULTS

The questionnaire attempted to reflect attitudes towards a number of variables. In addition to demographic data these included such factors as the kinds and types of relationships preferred, fears surrounding relationship termination, rejection, also attitudes towards exploitation, commitments.

First, with regard to demographic data the following characteristics were revealed. The mean $\bar{X}$ age for females was 26.660, with a standard deviation of 7.143. Thirty six per cent of the women were single. Forty per cent were married and twenty four per cent were divorced. It was determined that sixty per cent were living in an under $6,000 per year bracket, thirty four per cent were in the $6,000 to $10,000 group and only six per cent were inclusive of incomes $10,000 to $15,000 and above. Sixty six per cent identified their religious preference as Protestant, sixteen per cent as Roman Catholic and eighteen per cent as "other", which they did not define.

When asked the frequency of pre-marital relations, sixty two per cent reported its occurence on a weekly basis with a mean $\bar{x}$ of 2.225 and a standard deviation of 1.555. Twenty per cent reported monthly occurences with a mean $\bar{x}$ 2.000and a standard deviation of .882. Eighteen per cent reported its occurence only in isolated cases and only three subjects specified the exact number of times, which was slight.

With regard to males the mean $\bar{x}$ age was 25.242, standard deviation 2.486. By contrast a larger percentage, fifty two per cent, were single. Thirty nine per cent were married and a smaller percentage, nine per cent were divorced. Thirty nine per cent were in the under $6,000 bracket. Thirty per cent each were in the $6,000 to $10,000 and $10,000 to $15,000 and above groups. Thus socio-economic data indicated a more even distribution among categories for men and greater percentages of higher incomes than for women. Seventy per cent of the males chose Protestant as their religious preference. Twelve per cent indicated Roman Catholic and twelve per cent

chose "none". No one member of the female sample chose this latter category. Six per cent of the males chose "other".

When asked to report the frequency of occurence of pre-marital relations eighty two per cent said it took place on a weekly basis with a mean $\bar{x}$ of 3.111, standard deviation 1.768. Fifteen per cent said it took place on a monthly basis with a mean $\bar{x}$ of 4.200, standard deviation .966. Only three per cent reported its occurence in isolated occasions.

When asked with whom their relationships had predominantly taken place, ninety two per cent of the females as compared to thirty per cent of the males said with few but special partners. Six per cent of the men and zero per cent of the women picked numerous but special friends. Two per cent of the women and six per cent of the men indicated a few casual friends. Zero per cent of the women, but thirty seven per cent of the men reported numerous special and casual friends. Zero per cent of the women and six per cent of the men claimed a few special friends and numerous casual friends. The remaining six per cent of the women preferred numerous but special friends.

The next set of questions were aimed at tapping the feeling component. Subjects were asked: "How would you rate your feelings toward most of your partners on a five point scale?" The choices were; a) very mildly attracted to them, b) mildly attracted to them, c) strongly attracted to them, d) very strongly attracted to them, and e) in love with them. Values of one to five were assigned to answers a through e. The mean X response for females was 3.760 with a standard deviation of 1.915. For males it was 2.879 with a standard deviation of .915.

Next subjects were asked: "How do you feel if a partner or partners you are currently having sexual relations with also has these

relations with other members of the opposite sex on a regular basis?" On a six point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree the attitude of the females was slightly stronger, but both sexes were in the direction of disagreement. This is evidenced by the mean $\bar{X}$ scores shown in Table I.

Subjects were also asked: "How do you feel if your current sexual partner has these relations with other members of the opposite sex on an irregular basis?" On a scale from one to six Table I shows both men and women to be in the direction of disagreement, but less pronounced than in the previous question.

The next question relative to feelings was: " I feel my partner(s) were more attentive to me before I engaged in sexual relations with them." On a six point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree women in contrast to men showed some tendency to agree with the statement, while men generally disagreed as shown in Table I.

The next component analyzed dealt with feelings incurred after relationship terminations. The question read: "How do you usually feel when a love relationship which has involved sexual relations ends?" The scale was rated from one to four, that is not depressed at all, slightly depressed, moderately depressed, very depressed. The responses from Table II generally indicated moderate to slight depressed feelings with no startling differences between sexes.

Subjects were then asked: "When a love relationship ends which has not involved sexual relations I feel:" Again the same scoring system was employed. The results as shown in Table II indicate only slight if any depression and not much contrast between sexes.

Table I

Means and Standard Deviations for Questions Involving Feelings, Fears, Exploitation, Commitments, and Ideals.

Question		5	6	7	8	19	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Females	$\bar{X}$	5.380	4.200	3.380	2.860	3.600	4.060	4.160	3.620	3.840	3.580	2.440	3.660	4.140	2.320
	S.D.	.847	8.764	1.838	1.897	1.747	1.690	1.742	1.876	2.412	1.642	1.580	1.708	1.716	1.645
Males	$\bar{X}$	4.848	3.970	4.576	4.333	2.546	3.455	4.788	5.576	3.970	3.788	3.091	3.273	3.394	2.212
	S.D.	1.164	6.242	1.425	1.800	2.486	1.712	1.462	1.905	1.279	1.637	1.653	1.503	1.349	1.577

Table II

Means and Standard Deviations for Questions Involving Relationship Termination.

Question		8	9	12	13
Females	$\bar{x}$	2.902	2.205	2.115	1.410
	S.D.	2.508	1.026	.032	.785
Males	$\bar{x}$	2.219	1.587	1.424	1.182
	S.D.	3.652	1.084	.792	.848

Table III

Response Percentages for Questions Involving Love Relationships ans Importance of Sex.

F = Females M = Males

Question		10		11		20	
		F	M	F	M	F	M
Answer	a	8%	9%	4%	9%	24%	52%
	b	12%	3%	0%	0%	54%	45%
	c	36%	15%	22%	3%	6%	3%
	d	30%	64%	56%	64%	16%	0%
	e	14%	9%	18%	24%	0%	0%

Next the question read as follows: "When a love relationship which has involved sexual relations ends:" a) I blame myself for the termination, b) I blame my partner for the termination, c) I blame myself and my partner for the termination, d) I do not blame anyone for the termination. As can be seen from Table III the greatest percentage of men chose "d". The greater percentage of women chose "c".

Subjects were then asked: "When a love relationship which has not involved sexual relations ends", whom was blamed. The choices were identical to the preceeding question. The largest percentage of men and women chose "d"(see Table III).

Subjects were also questioned with regard to casual relationships. They were asked: "How do you feel when a casual relationship which has involved sex ends?" The same scale previously used to measure depression was presented. The scores of both sexes from Table IIindicate slight or no depression. In addition they were asked: "how do you feel when a casual relationship which has not involved sexual relations ends?" Scores from Table II favor a tendency toward no depression, and they are lower than responses to the previous question. Subjects were further quizzed on their feelings when a casual relationship which has involved sex and one which has not ends. The response scale in both questions was the same as that previously used to measure blame. As seen from Table IV in response to both questions both sexes did not blame anyone for termination.

Subjects were then asked what kind of relationship (involving sex) they would prefer to have and what kind of relationship (involving sex) they thought members of the opposite sex wanted. The choices were: a) a steady monogamous love relationship, b) a steady emotional relation-

Table IV

Response Percentages for Questions Involving Casual Relationships, Types of Relationships, Types of Relationships Desired.
F = Females M = Males

Question		14		15		16		17		21	
		F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Answer	a	80%	3%	4%	6%	60%	30%	26%	58%	72%	16%
	b	8%	3%	2%	0%	12%	30%	10%	30%	14%	19%
	c	28%	6%	16%	3%	6%	15%	24%	6%	24%	31%
	d	50%	88%	76%	91%	22%	25%	40%	6%	6%	34%
No Answer		6%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

ship, but not one involving love or monogamy, c) a casual relationship where meetings are infrequent but imply an ongoing commitment, d) a casual relationship with absolutely no commitment. Table IV reveals a large percentage of males chose either a or b, but a sizable per cent also chose d. Males tended to perceive females as preferring answer a. In fact Table IV shows that females pointedly favor a by sixty per cent. However, they perceived males as preferring d, which is incompatable with their own preferences.

Another variable studied was the element of fear. The questions read: "I fear very close relationships because I do not wish to become rejected by a member of the opposite sex I hold in esteem. The next question stated:"I fear very close relationships because they involve responsibilities and commitments I do not wish to make." Again the responses were in the form of a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree scored from one to six. For women the responses from Table I point to an inclination to generally or slightly agree with both statements. Men by comparison slightly disagreed with the first question, but generally agreed with the second.

The subjects were also asked: "How important is sex to you in your relationship?" The choices were: a) very important, b) important, c) important because my partner says it is, D) not important, e) very unimportant. As seen in Table III the majority of women answered b. Males differed as more picked a but the majority picked either a or b.

Subjects were then asked what type of relationship they enjoyed sex the most in. The responses were the same as those previously used (a steady monogamous love relationship etc.). Table IV indicates that males chose casual relationships. Females preferred steady monogamous ones.

Subjects were also quizzed as to whether they felt: "Superior

sexual performance can formulate and maintain any kind of relationship with the opposite sex. Attitudes of both sexes ranged from slightly agree to slightly disagree (Table I).

Two other variables studied were whether subjects had felt exploited in their relationships and how they felt about commitments. The first question read: "I feel that most members of the opposite sex have exploited me in my sexual relationships with them." The second question read the same except the word "some" replaced "most". As shown in Table I both men and women tended to slightly agree with the first statement. Women slightly agreed while men generally disagreed with the second statement.

The next statement was: "I feel that most members of the opposite sex demand too many commitments in their sexual relationships with me. The following statement was identical to the preceeding one except the word "some" was again substituted for most. For both questions, Table I indicates both sexes' attitudinal direction is between slightly agree and slightly disagree.

The next set of questions attempted to determine what the ideal relationship is as perceived by the subjects. Subjects were asked to respond to "A marriage relationship is the ideal relationship." Table I shows that females generally agreed and males slightly agreed. Subjects were also asked to respond to: "Living together is the ideal relationship," and "Staying single and merely dating the opposite sex is the ideal relationship to have with them." As can be seen from Table I the responses of the women were to slightly agree and to generally agree for men.

Lastly, subjects were asked whether: "Most of my relationships with the opposite sex have been pleasant?" Table I indicates women slightly agreed while men generally agreed.

DISCUSSION

Data analysis lended support to the general hypotheses previously stated.

First, with respect to demographic data it was found that the greatest percentage of women lived in the under $6,000 bracket. Males exhibited more spread among income groups and more in higher brackets. Females also report a less frequent occurence of sexual relations than men. Although it is of importance to note that neither sex reported a high incidence of sexual relations on a weekly basis. This seems to dispell the myth of Black promiscuity.

Women as opposed to men overwhelmingly reported relationships had taken place with few but special partners. Men were more given to relations with numerous special and casual friends. They also reported being more strongly attracted to their partners than men. Apparently men engage in more relationships without strong physical attraction.

In addition, females had a stronger proclivity to feel partners were more attentive before sexual relations.

With regard to relationship termination women had a slightly greater propensity to blame themselves and their partners while men blamed no one. This difference only held true for relationships involving sexual relations.

When asked what type of relationship the subjects desired females clearly chose a steady monogamous love relationship. Males chose either the same or a relationship not involving monogamy or love. Ironically neither sex perceived the other as wanting the type of relationships they themselves did. Females were more disposed to fear responsibilities and commitments in close relationships. Moreover, women claimed to enjoy sex more in steady or monogamous relationships, while men reportedly could enjoy it as well in casual affairs. Women were also more inclined to feel slightly exploited in

their relationships than men.

Lastly, women were found to agree more to marriage as the ideal relationship. In addition, they were somewhat less prone than men to agree with staying single. They reported their encounters with the opposite sex to have been somewhat less pleasant than what men reported.

In summary, it is obvious different attitudinal differences exist between the two sexes regarding premarital relations. In one vein it appears that the Black female is more apt to seek stability, a possible outcome of variables from her own cultural heritage. Even more probable as a female in American society she has received input from both cultural standards. It appears her standards are not different from what one would expect of women in general. This is contrary to the stereotypes the dominant culture has previously purported for Blacks.

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